

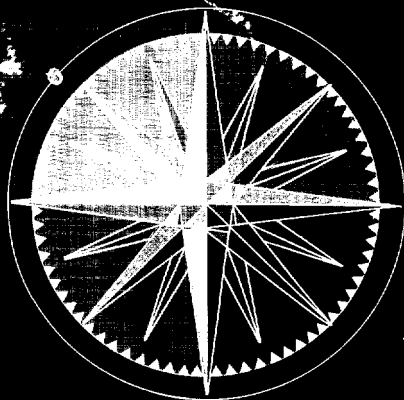
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SPECIAL REPORT

EXTREMIST INFLUENCE IN NORTH VIETNAMESE PARTY

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EXTREMIST INFLUENCE IN NORTH VIETNAMESE PARTY

Top party leaders in Hanoi who favor an aggressive, full-throttle approach to foreign and domestic policy appear to have gained greater influence as advisers to party and state chief Ho Chi Minh' during the past several months. They have taken the lead in voicing the tougher line adopted by Hanoi recently on its internal economic program, the war in South Vietnam, and the Sino-Soviet dispute. Growing dissatisfaction on Ho's part with the impact of Soviet policy on North Vietnamese foreign and domestic goals has probably strengthened the hands of the militants, who have traditionally been sympathetic to some of Peiping's extremist policies and practices. This faction is likely to remain in the ascendancy in Vietnamese politics for at least as long as strains between Moscow and Hanoi persist at their present level.

The Factional Background

The North Vietnamese party hierarchy has long been divided into extremist and moderate factions. It has, nonetheless, been characterized by a remarkable stability of leadership. There have been no major purges, and a firm facade of unity has always been maintained. This stability has clearly resulted from the pre-eminent influence of Ho Chi Minh, who has ruled the party with an iron hand since its founding 33 years ago.

Ho has kept himself above factional rivalries, using them and perhaps even encouraging them in gaining his objectives. Exploiting his immense personal popularity, and carefully balancing one group against the other, he has managed to avoid exclusive dependence on any one faction. At the same time, the

existence of two groups with discernibly different views allows him to change policy directions merely by relegating one group to the background while giving freer rein to the other. By using his subordinates to enunciate major policy lines in this way, moreover, he has protected himself in the event of a policy failure.

At present, the factional line-ups appear to center on the several personalities who some day hope to succeed the 73-year-old Ho. Personal rivalries and antipathies doubtless also play a role in the alignments, although firm information on these questions is lacking.

The extremists apparently take their cue from the powerful party first secretary, Le Duan. Other prominent politburo members of the militant group are Truong Chinh, former

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**THE
NORTH
VIETNAMESE
LEADERSHIP**

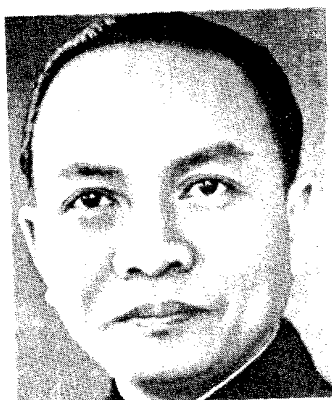


HO CHI MINH

"THE MILITANTS"



LE DUAN



TRUONG CHINH



NGUYEN CHI THANH

"THE MODERATES"



PHAM VAN DONG



VO NGUYEN GIAP

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party secretary general, Le Duc Tho, chief of the party organization department, Nguyen Chi Thanh, former top army political commissar, and Hoang Van Hoan, former ambassador to China. The militants probably also receive backing from Nguyen Duy Trinh, state planning commission boss.

In contrast to the moderates, the extremists are inclined to view problems almost exclusively from a political standpoint, and to play down the realities in a given situation. Thus, their speeches and pronouncements are almost always strongly doctrinaire, placing heavy emphasis, for example, on the efficacy of such things as "revolutionary spirit" in the solution of regime problems. Some of these individuals in the past have argued for the adoption of extremist policies espoused by the Chinese Communists.

The increase in the influence of the extremists marks the culmination of a drive to regain prestige lost in 1956 when Truong Chinh was removed from his party secretarial post and forced to take the blame publicly for the collapse of the regime's land reform program, which had been modeled on the Chinese Communist practice. Moderate leaders within the party and the professional economic planners were then able to press ahead with more cautious programs.

The leading spokesman for the moderates has long been

Premier Pham Van Dong. His primary support apparently has come from Vo Nguyen Giap, the minister of defense who is believed to be a personal enemy of both Truong Chinh and Nguyen Chi Thanh. The moderates may also pick up some backing from Pham Hung, long identified with the Communist insurrection in South Vietnam and, on at least economic matters, from the conservative State Construction Commission chief, Le Thanh Nghi, who owes his politburo standing almost solely to his competence in the industrial management and planning field.

Ho's paramount influence in determining the ups and downs of the two factions was apparent in the Truong Chinh incident when Ho himself took over Chinh's position as party secretary to bolster the public image of the party. It was probably Ho who insisted, to maintain balance, that Chinh be retained on the politburo and not exiled to the limbo that usually awaits Communists who are blamed for party failures.

Although Ho took on the title of secretary general, the actual operation of the job went to one of the Secretaries, Le Duan. In this capacity, Le Duan gradually recouped the prestige of the militants, formally taking over the post, the title of which was changed from secretary general to first secretary, in September 1960. He now appears to be unchallenged as Ho's good right hand and eventual successor.

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VIEWS CHARACTERISTIC OF NORTH VIETNAM'S EXTREMIST FACTION

(From an article by Nguyen Chi Thanh in the October 1963 issue of the party journal Hoc Tap)

On Revolutionary Spirit:

A number of comrades have come "scarcely to think of revolutionary duties and Communist aspirations. As a result, their struggle spirit decreased and their revolutionary virtues became blurred."

"To overcome erroneous views and develop correct ones we must pay special attention to ideological education and revolutionary struggle. ...All that is needed is that party members clearly recognize their responsibilities and exert every effort."

On Economic Policy:

"A small number of comrades at a certain point...lost confidence...and wished to reduce the rate of industrialization. Some comrades even rejected the self-sufficiency policy."

"Each of us must assert his confidence in the party line of socialist industrialization and must not waver while fulfilling this central task. Any hesitation or deviation...is harmful to our revolutionary work."

On the War in South Vietnam:

"Some comrades tremble before the fierce struggle in South Vietnam. ...Manifesting their lack of revolutionary consciousness, they did not strengthen their determination to struggle protractedly and fiercely for national unification. A small number of comrades do not trust the fighting methods adopted by the southern people."

On the Sino-Soviet Split:

"Our party has the duty to participate in the struggle against revisionism and right opportunism, the present main dangers for the world Communist movement...and the revolutionary movement of world peoples."

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Economic Policy

With Le Duan leading the way, party extremists this spring apparently overcame moderate foot-dragging and gained politburo approval to push ahead with the regime's program of economic self-reliance through expansion of heavy industry.

The moderates' reluctance on this score apparently stemmed from doubts as to whether Soviet economic assistance could in the future be counted on in the amounts originally planned. When the goals of the first five-year plan (1961-65) were announced, an ambitious industrial expansion program was set forward which envisioned substantial Soviet and Chinese technical and material aid. North Vietnamese propaganda this year, however, suggests that the Soviets have been pressing Hanoi to orient its development primarily toward complementing the Soviet and other satellite economic structure through the bloc Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA). The Soviets have presumably suggested the impracticality of a substantial industrial program in the overpopulated, underdeveloped, and resource-poor area now under Hanoi's control.

Such a policy, however, was clearly distasteful to the extremists, who adhere strongly to the classical Communist view of state power based on industrial might. Le Duan in an 18

May speech, for example, rejected any economic arrangement where Hanoi would specialize in tropical goods, trading them for industrial articles produced by Eastern European bloc nations. The first secretary emphasized that North Vietnam must develop an independent economy and specifically rejected a role in the bloc economy such as that played within the USSR by its Asian Socialist Republics. Duan also rejected suggestions, apparently put forward by the moderates, that Hanoi emphasize the production of consumer goods and raise its desperately subpar standard of living before building heavy industry.

In a 29 July speech, Le Duan charged that "some comrades" erroneously believe the question of industrial development is a "purely professional" problem. Duan argued that it was in the truest sense a matter of the application of "revolutionary spirit" and as such a proper concern of the party in which political objectives must be paramount. The militants appear determined to push ahead firmly in the direction of industrial growth, even though the regime has cut back drastically on many of the initial goals of the five-year plan, and is almost certainly faced with a fourth straight year of serious shortfalls in agricultural production. It is probable that their efforts will result in little real industrial progress and will mainly complicate the economic problems now faced by Hanoi. However,

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since North Vietnam is still essentially an agricultural economy, a failure in the industrial program will not necessarily destroy the economy nor threaten the regime.

The Viet Cong War

Ranking alongside or perhaps even ahead of Hanoi's concern with its economic development is a determination to reunite Vietnam under Communist rule. Both militants and moderates share this goal and at present seem to have submerged their differences over the tactics to be used in achieving it. However, there apparently was a heated debate within the party in late 1962 and early 1963 over the proper tempo of the insurgent warfare in the face of the growing effectiveness of South Vietnamese anti-guerrilla efforts supported by the US.

The moderates apparently suggested that the Viet Cong concentrate for the immediate future primarily on conserving their military apparatus and bases. However, the militant view that a more vigorous effort should be made to bolster Viet Cong strength appears to have prevailed. Since April, considerable evidence has accumulated that Hanoi is making a greater effort to stiffen Viet Cong military strength, possibly with a view to helping the Communists regain in some areas the military initiative they enjoyed in 1960-61. More guerrillas and increased amounts of

new material have reportedly been infiltrated into South Vietnam. In September, Communist-initiated incidents reached their highest peak in over 14 months.

The advent of rule by a military junta in South Vietnam will probably occasion no slowdown in Hanoi's efforts to reinforce the Viet Cong. Hanoi will probably interpret the development as foreshadowing a stronger anti-Communist military push.

General Military Policy

In addition to their influence on strategy toward the Viet Cong war, the extremists appear also to have increased their voice in the formulation of general North Vietnamese military policy. One of the clearest indications of this is the sudden emergence from political obscurity of the militant, pro-Chinese politburo member, Nguyen Chi Thanh. In 1961 Thanh was ousted from his job as political commissar of the army, apparently at the behest of the moderates. Since mid-March 1963, however, he has assumed the role of the regime's leading spokesman on military affairs. He has spoken authoritatively on the insurgent war effort in South Vietnam and attacked the present level of military efficiency and political indoctrination in the North Vietnamese Army. He has also lashed out at the "modern revisionists," thus tending to align himself personally with Peiping in the Sino-Soviet dispute.

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During the same period General Giap and his chief subordinates in the Defense Ministry have been almost entirely out of the public eye. Although no proof is available, it is possible that the Giap group argued against the development of closer military ties with Communist China. Giap himself is known to have opposed such ties in the past.

A hint as to the growth of Chinese influence within the North Vietnamese military was contained in a rare public exposition of Hanoi's views on military affairs by Assistant Chief of Staff Hoang Van Thai in the September issue of the party theoretical journal. General Thai repeatedly stressed the need for a program of "gradualism" in modernizing and improving the armed forces, declaring that it must be based on Hanoi's own industrial capacity. In the absence of a complete arsenal of modern weapons, he declared, a program to raise the political awareness (revolutionary spirit) of the armed forces is a central and decisive task of the regime. He also argued at length that men and not weapons are the primary determinant of victory in modern warfare. Thai's remarks echo current Peiping pronouncements on policy toward the armed forces.

The Sino-Soviet Dispute

Pressure by the extremist faction in the North Vietnamese

party has probably been partly responsible for Hanoi's public endorsement during the past few months of Peiping's major views in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The extremists appear to have played on widespread fears within the North Vietnamese party that Soviet tactics of a detente with the US will undercut Communist militancy in South Vietnam and Laos. The achievement of Communist objectives in these countries remains a prime policy objective of North Vietnam. The extremists have taken the lead in Hanoi's public attacks on the Soviet-US atomic test ban treaty and in propaganda calling for full-time, militant struggle by "all Communists" in support of "national liberation wars." The latter theme echoes Peiping's more direct attacks on alleged Soviet softness in supporting Communist revolutionaries.

Comments in the official North Vietnamese press suggest that Moscow may have felt it necessary to warn Hanoi against pushing the war in South Vietnam to the point of risking massive US military retaliation. In a July 1963 article on the war, Nguyen Chi Thanh contemptuously dismissed those who are "afraid of the United States and think that any stiff opposition to the US would bring about nuclear bomb blasts." He went on to predict eventual victory for the revolutionaries by the classic methods of Communist revolution and rejected the Soviet concept of peaceful acquisition of power.

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Pressure from the militants may account for the replacement last April of moderate Foreign Minister Ung Van Khiem by the more militant and pro-Chinese Xuan Thuy. There have been no other hints as yet that the extremists will be able to engineer additional personnel changes, although they doubtless hope to achieve a permanent reduction in the authority of their moderate comrades.

The Outlook

As long as Soviet policy follows lines distasteful to Hanoi, it is probable that the North Vietnamese will continue to support Peiping on key issues in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Ho Chi Minh clearly views present Chinese Communist policies as more in line with Hanoi's own domestic and external interests. This situation will tend to

perpetuate and probably to increase the prestige and authority of the extremist faction.

If Moscow's policy were to harden, and particularly if the Soviets were to become more vigorous in rendering political and diplomatic support to the Viet Cong, North Vietnamese support of the Chinese would probably ebb substantially. Ho Chi Minh might, in fact, attempt to wrap his party again in a mantle of neutrality between Peiping and Moscow. Such a development would appear to offer the moderates their best chance of regaining the ground in party councils which they have apparently lost. Their position may also improve if the regime fails in a reasonable length of time to accomplish its lofty economic objectives through the procedures now being advocated by the extremists.

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